

SPY IS UNDERGOING MORE QUESTIONING

Outcome Called Crucial in the Sentencing of John Walker

by PHILIP SHENON

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 23 — Government officers have resumed their questioning of John A. Walker Jr. about his family's Soviet spy ring, Reagan Administration officials and his lawyer said today.

The officers are expected to use a polygraph, or lie detector, in questioning the Navy veteran within the next several days.

Justice Department officials said Mr. Walker, who has pleaded guilty to espionage, was found deceptive in earlier questioning with a polygraph about the extent and origins of the Soviet espionage operation. According to prosecutors, the spy ring provided the Soviet Union with some of the Navy's most secret information about codes and coding equipment.

The results of the new questioning are thought to be critical in determining whether Mr. Walker and his son, Michael, a former Navy seaman who has also confessed spying, will be sentenced as scheduled on Nov. 6.

Justice Department officials have threatened to rescind a plea agreement with John Walker unless he is completely truthful about the spy case. Under a plea bargain that could hasten parole, Mr. Walker would be sentenced to life in prison and his son would receive a sentence of 25 years.

A Justice Department official knowledgeable about the case said he believed that the Walkers would be sentenced on Nov. 6, but he would not rule out a last-minute request for delay.

'The Same Old Stuff'

Mr. Walker's lawyer, Fred Warren Bennett of Baltimore, said that Mr. Walker was interviewed last week by analysts from the National Security Agency. He said the interviews involved "the same old stuff — they didn't confront him with anything new or different." The Justice Department has said it is concerned that Mr. Walker is not telling the truth about the creation of the spy ring and its membership.

In the past, John Walker said that he founded the spy ring and did not recruit his brother Arthur Walker until after Arthur had retired from the Navy in 1973 as a lieutenant commander.

But officials say they believe that John Walker may have been lying and that Arthur created the espionage operation while he was on active duty. The brothers were found deceptive when questioned about the point while being checked by a polygraph, officials said.

Administration officials have said that Arthur Walker could have done enormous damage to national security if he spied while in the Navy, where he had access to highly classified information about the American submarine fleet. He is serving a life sentence for espionage, having been convicted of stealing secrets from a military contractor for whom he worked after retirement from the Navy.

Arthur Walker was recently returned to Baltimore by the Government for additional questioning about the case.

The fourth Navy veteran convicted in the case, Jerry A. Whitworth, has undergone extensive Government interviews in San Francisco, where he was prosecuted. Mr. Whitworth, a former communications officer, was sentenced to 365 years in prison.